THE

RAGGED SCHOOL UNION

MAGAZINE.

"Noble the thought, and glorious the design,
To found instruction on a base divine,
To make the Sacred Volume rank the first,
In which Salvation's charter is rehearsed:
To make the learning of the present race
Tend as a means, through knowledge, unto grace;
To form their minds in the exemplar plan
Of *Him*—the Saviour, and the Friend of man."

VOLUME VIII.

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ADDRESS TO OUR READERS.

WITH the following remarks we complete our eighth volume, and, according to our usual custom, glance at the efforts we have put forth during the last twelve months for bettering the condition of those whose welfare it has been as much our privilege as our duty to advocate. The extension of the Ragged School movement has been as gratifying as it has been necessitous. There is scarcely a locality in the British metropolis that it has not more or less penetrated, and in which it has had its hallowing influence. Most of the old cities and large towns throughout Great Britain have adopted the London movement; and, from the reports that have from time to time been furnished, it appears large success has attended the effort. Ireland, too, sees that there is something about our plan (it can scarcely be called a system) that is adapted to the wants of our Hibernian brother; hence we find Ragged Schools have been established in many places, among which we may name Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and Waterford. We also find our plans copied by the Roman Catholics of London somewhat extensively. In the metropolis of England, their practice is to plant a school as near to our own as they can find accommodation. In one case where we had built a school, they came, took the next site, and upon one-half of our Protestant school-wall built another for the Romanizing school; and thus they stand side by side. We, however, fear not for the result. The darkness, ignorance, and superstition, so natural to the night of Romanism, must give place to the rising of a sun soaring to its meridian splendour. These opposing efforts have not had the effects of reducing our operations, for, when making up our statistics for this year, we find our numbers were

128 Sunday Schools, with 17,327 scholars
98 Day Schools, with 14,093 ,,
117 Evening Schools, with 8,026 ,,

showing an increase in the year of

14 Sunday Schools, and 2,711 scholars
17 Day Schools, and 3,156 ,,
6 Evening Schools, and 688 ,,

It was also very gratifying to observe that, in the same period, the number of our Voluntary Teachers increased from 1,857 to 2,139.

To sustain a scheme so extensively carried out has not been effected without much personal sacrifice and large pecuniary cost. God has raised up a little army of indefatigable labourers; and although many have been called to their everlasting home, yet the number of workers in the vineyard is constantly increasing. Funds have also been forthcoming. In a most providential manner, a considerable legacy became available for Ragged Schools just as the late war with Russia commenced; that legacy enabled the Committee of the Ragged School Union to act with a liberal hand to all necessitous schools during the time the war continued, a period in which very many of the schools must have been closed had it not been for such extra assistance. That fund lasted just as long as the war continued. Surely in this is clearly seen the providential hand of God.

The past excites our gratitude, but the future demands the exercise of faith and action. This will be apparent when we state that in the last two years and a half the *excess* of expenditure of the Parent Society in support of their affiliated Schools and Refuges amounted to £4,400, and that in consequence of having the legacy referred to to fall back upon, the Committee granted annual sums to the schools, which still continue, but which must be withdrawn unless the funds at the disposal of the Committee of the Ragged School be replenished. And should such help be withdrawn, there is too much reason to fear that many of the schools must curtail their operations and some must be altogether closed.

During the last year some important advances have been made. The Reformatory and Refuge Union took its stand among public institutions, whose *debût* was full of promise. In the last session of Parliament some important Bills became Acts. By one of these the "wee pawn" system has, we trust, become successfully checked, and Caledonian sons will no longer be trained to become "young Scottish thieves." The Committee of Council on Education have decided to extend the Government grant, so that Ragged Refuges and *Industrial* Schools may receive a portion of the Parliamentary vote, but will not, under any circumstances, render aid towards the support of the usual *educational* Ragged Schools.

We now enter upon another year's labours, buoyed up by the conviction that we have not yet laboured in vain, nor spent our strength for naught, and that He whom we serve will crown the efforts of Ragged School labours with his abundant blessing.

1, *Exeter Hall, December*, 1856.

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